



**State of Connecticut**  
**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
STATE CAPITOL  
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**REPRESENTATIVE JAIME FOSTER, PH.D., R.D.**

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**MEMBER**

COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN  
ENERGY & TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE  
PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE

March 18, 2021

To Chairs Representative Gresco, Senator Cohen and Ranking Members Senator Miner and Representative Harding-

It's my honor to come before the Environment committee today and testify on three bills of critical significance to Ellington and East Windsor.

**HB 6503 AN ACT CONCERNING THE SITING OF ANAEROBIC DIGESTION FACILITIES ON FARMS.**

This bill is designed to streamline and accelerate the permitting process for Anaerobic Digesters. Ellington and East Windsor are proudly agricultural towns and anyone who lives here will tell you how proud we are of Oakridge Dairy, the state's largest dairy farm. Five generations of Bahler's have stewarded the land, tended to dairy cows and served our community as integral volunteers and neighbors in our community. The Bahler's have been working for years to create a state of the art, or state of the science facility balancing best animal husbandry practices, land stewardship and promoting positive environmental and community impact, one of these long sought-after efforts has been to build an on farm anaerobic digester. This effort has been met with incredibly burdensome and time-consuming permitting that has in their reports scared off engineers with experience building ADs in other states.

Oakridge, like other farms in our community, knows that they rely on a healthy environment to thrive and they want to be the environmental allies they can be by building this Anaerobic Digester. I urge the environment committee to pass SB 930 to help my community, Oakridge Dairy and most importantly the environment.

Secondly, I would like to thank Representative Borer for raising HB 6408 AN ACT CONCERNING THE SITING OF CERTAIN SOLAR FACILITIES ON FARMLANDS AND CORE FORESTS. I ask for revision and further consideration of this bill. Conversations about balancing farmland preservation, economic viability of farms, the environment and preserving open space are commonplace and top priorities in my district. Striking this balance makes balancing solar and farm initiatives challenging at best. These conversations are critical and challenging in our communities but farmland and forest preservation is important to our environment, food supply and quite frankly are the lifeblood of our community. Solar is critical to meeting the state's renewable and zero carbon energy efforts

and our local solar companies are similarly integral community partners. This bill seeks to strike a balance between two industries that are vital and I believe there is still a lot of work to be done in this area. It is my understanding that the Connecticut Farm Bureau is advocating for an Agriculture sector representative to serve on the siting council. I agree with this recommendation and hope the committee will consider this friendly suggestion for amendment. Farmers struggle with this as a concept, many eager to tell you it is not the state's role to tell them what to do with their land, particularly when partnering with a solar company and leasing their land is a key to economic stability. I urge the committee to consider, in collaboration with those of us on Energy and Technology, a method to encourage solar development in brownfields, defunct quarries, side of highways, tops of parking garages and more to limit the competition between farms and solar, an incentive approach in lieu of a disincentive. The shift proposed here between two and one megawatts impacts a different size solar company (much smaller businesses now) and in what I see in my community is not getting at what is really gobbling up farmland, which is the very large grid scale solar arrays that are 100+ megawatts. I hope to work with many of you on what efforts can strike this delicate balance.

Lastly, I urge adoption of SB 1031 AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF SODIUM CHLORIDE TO MITIGATE ICE AND SNOW ACCUMULATIONS. Ellington had whole communities adversely impacted by road salt application, homes with well, pipe and appliance damage all related to the corrosive nature of these road salt applications. I would ask that the committee consider adding to section 5 on lines 137-138 testing for Ethylene Dibromide (EDM) and Nitrates which are common contaminants in well water in agriculture communities with a history of farming tobacco.

I thank the environment committee for their time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Jaime

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jaime Foster". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "J" and "F".